

## Message Text

CONFIDENTIAL

PAGE 01 QUITO 07723 130643Z

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ACTION ARA-06

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FM AMEMBASSY QUITO

TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 3328

INFO AMEMBASSY PANAMA

C O N F I D E N T I A L QUITO 7723

LIMDIS

DEPTO 48

EO 11652: GDS

TAGS: OVIP (INGERSOLL, ROBERT S)

SUBJECT: BILATERAL CONVERSATION WITH PANAMAIAN FOREIGN MINISTER

TACK

SUMMARY. TACK SAID HE WAS PLEASED WITH THE RECENT PROGRESS OF THE CANAL TALKS. HE IS ALREADY TAKING STEPS TO EDUCATE THE PANAMANIAN PUBLIC ON THE DESIRABILITY OF ACCEPTING A REASONABLE TREATY. HE SAID HE UNDERSTOOD THE U.S. POSITION AT THE QUITO MEETING AND HOPED THAT THE U.S. UNDERSTOOD PANAMA'S POLICY OF RESUMING RELATIONS WITH CUBA.

1. I HAD A VERY CORDIAL CONVERSATION WITH TACK THIS AFTER-NOON ON THE STATUS OF THE CANAL NEGOTIATIONS AND ON HEMISPHERIC PROBLEMS. PANAMANIAN OAS AMBASSADOR PITT WAS ALSO PRESENT.

2. I TOLD TACK THAT I FELT THAT THE MEETING, FAR FROM BEING A FAILURE, HAD BEEN A USEFUL EXCHANGE OF VIEWS WHICH WOULD BE IMPORTANT IN THE ULTIMATE SETTLEMENT OF THE PROBLEM OF CUBA SANCTIONS. I REITERATED THE U.S. POSITION OF ATTEMPTING NOT TO INFLUENCE THE POSITIONS OF OTHER GOVERNMENTS AND OUR RESPECT FOR THE VIEWS OF  
CONFIDENTIAL

CONFIDENTIAL

PAGE 02 QUITO 07723 130643Z

THOSE FAVORING LIFTING SANCTIONS. TACK REPLIED THAT HE

UNDERSTOOD PERFECTLY THE U.S. POSITION AND DID NOT HOLD IT AGAINST US. HE SAID THAT HE HOPED THAT THE UNITED STATES ALSO UNDERSTOOD PANAMA'S POSITION. HE SAID THAT PANAMA HAD RESUMED RELATIONS WITH CUBA PRIOR TO THE MEETING, NOT BECAUSE OF PANAMA'S SYMPATHY FOR THE CUBAN GOVERNMENT, BUT BECAUSE OF ITS INTEREST IN THE CUBAN PEOPLE.

3. I ASKED TACK HOW HE FELT THE CANAL NEGOTIATIONS WERE GOING. HE ANSWERED THAT HE WAS EXTREMELY PLEASED WITH PROGRESS DURING THE NEGOTIATIONS WHICH ENDED NOVEMBER 6. HE SAID THAT QUITE SATISFACTORY PROGRESS HAD BEEN MADE IN SUCH MATTERS AS ADMINISTRATION OF THE CANAL, JURISDICTION, AND THE GEOGRAPHIC AREAS TO BE USED BY THE U.S. HE SAID THAT PERHAPS THE MOST IMPORTANT ITEM TO BE TAKEN UP IN THE NEXT SESSION WOULD BE THE QUESTION OF ECONOMIC BENEFITS.

4. TACK SAID THAT PANAMA WAS NEGOTIATING VERY SERIOUSLY TO RESOLVE OUTSTANDING PROBLEMS, AND HE FELT THAT THE UNITED STATES WAS EQUALLY SERIOUS. HE SAID THAT, BECAUSE OF THE SENSIBILITIES OF THE PANAMANIAN PEOPLE ON THIS QUESTION, PANAMA WAS TAKING SPECIAL CARE THAT THE LANGUAGE WOULD BE SATISFACTORY FROM A PUBLIC RELATIONS STANDPOINT. I RESPONDED THAT I AGREED THAT THIS WAS APPROPRIATE AND IMPORTANT.

5. I TOLD TACK THAT I FELT THAT BOTH THE UNITED STATES AND PANAMA SHOULD BEGIN WORKING SERIOUSLY TOWARD THE EDUCATION OF OUR RESPECTIVE PEOPLES ON THIS ISSUE. I NOTED THAT WE HAVE OUR PROBLEMS WITH THE CONGRESS AND THAT WE WERE BEGINNING TO DO A LITTLE EDUCATIONAL WORK IN THAT FIELD. I SAID IT WOULD BE DIFFICULT, BUT I BELIEVED THAT WE COULD PERSUADE THE CONGRESS OF THE DESIRABILITY OF A REASONABLE TREATY. TACK SAID HE SHARED OUR OPTIMISM AND THAT HE HAD ALREADY BEGUN THE TASK OF BRINGING THE PANAMANIAN PEOPLE TO ACCEPT A REASONABLE TREATY. HE SAID HE HAD BEGUN HOLDING CONFERENCES, SPEECHES AND SEMINARS ON THE QUESTION IN VARIOUS PARTS OF THE COUNTRY. I SAID I WAS GLAD TO

CONFIDENTIAL

CONFIDENTIAL

PAGE 03 QUITO 07723 130643Z

HEAR THIS.

6. I TOLD TACK THAT THE UNITED STATES GOVERNMENT FELT THAT THE CANAL PROBLEM WAS A BILATERAL ONE AND THAT WE HOPED HE SHARED OUR VIEW THAT PROGRESS COULD BEST BE MADE THROUGH BILATERAL CHANNELS. HE RESPONDED THAT HE FELT PROGRESS WAS BEING MADE IN THE TALKS AND HAD SPECIAL PRAISE FOR AMBASSADOR BUNKER, WHOME HE SEEMS GENUINELY TO

LIKE.

7. I PASSED ON TO TACK THE PERSONAL GREETINGS OF THE SECRETARY AND SAID THAT THE SECRETARY LOOKS FORWARD TO SEEING HIM IN BUENOS AIRES IN MARCH. TACK REPLIED THAT HE DID INDEED LOOK FORWARD TO SEEING THE SECRETARY THEN, AS WELL AS IN THE OAS GENERAL ASSEMBLY IN APRIL. HE TOOK THIS OPPORTUNITY TO SAY THAT THERE WERE A NUMBER OF IMPORTANT ISSUES TO BE DEALT WITH IN THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY, INCLUDING THE ELECTION OF A NEW SECRETARY GENERAL. HE SAID THAT PANAMA HAD NOT YET GIVEN ITS SUPPORT TO EITHER OF THE CANDIDATES. I SAID THAT WE TOO WERE WAITING TO MAKE OUR DECISION.

8. TACK SAID THAT ANOTHER IMPORTANT ISSUE IN THE NEXT GENERAL ASSEMBLY WOULD BE REFORM OF THE OAS. HE SAID THAT AMBASSADOR PITY, IN AN EARLY SESSION OF THE SPECIAL COMMITTEE, WOULD PROPOSE A REFORM OF THE OAS SECRETARIAT, WHICH WOULD MORE CLEARLY SEPARATE THE TECHNICAL FROM THE POLITICAL FUNCTIONS OF THE OAS. AMBASSADOR PITY SPELLED THIS OUT IN SOMEWHAT MORE DETAIL AND SAID THAT HE WAS ALSO WORKING CLOSELY WITH THE U.S. DELEGATION ON A SYSTEM OF EXTERNAL AUDITING FOR THE OAS.

9. COMMENT: TACK WAS PLEASANT, IN FACT WARM, AND WAS APPARENTLY ON HIS VERY BEST BEHAVIOR. HE SEEMED QUITE SINCERE IN HIS OPTIMISTIC APPRECIATION OF THE STATUS OF THE TALKS.  
INGERSOLL

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